1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

pipe. When the time for smoking had arrived, the leader ordered the fire built up. In the light of its blaze he filled the pipe. The next step was invocation. Holding the pipe to the sky, offering was made to the Sun. This done, a pinch of tobacco was taken from the bowl and laid upon the ground—an offering to the Earth. If at any stage of this process the silence was broken, it was necessary to make a fresh start by dumping all the tobacco from the pipe out on the ground and starting anew. Informants did not know of any consequences being visited upon the breaker of the tabu. When finally the pipe was prepared, the fire-tender crossed directly over to the leader and tendered a live coal. With the issuance of smoke the ceremony was done and the old men could lapse into their round of conversation. The pipe was passed among them and carefully smoked until it was burned out. Then after a bit, the refilling and lighting ceremony was again solemnly performed and they were ready for another round of talk. Four times they filled and smoked the pipe out; then they broke up for the night. The fire-tender made first exit through the door. The others followed after in procession, all treading around the tipi to the north. But during the course of the evening a man could make non-ceremonial exit from either side of the door.

The talk turned on matters both amusing and serious; the old men were eclectic in their interests. On occasion they made an amusing turn on such coup-counting bouts as Grinnell reports for the Cheyenne.

> . . . the two bands were ranged on opposite sides of the lodge, facing each other . . . When all were ready to begin, he (the umpire) passed a counter to the man sitting at one end of the line. The counter passed from hand to hand until it reached one who had done this thing, when he narrated the circumstances, perhaps mentioning the name of some witness to the deed. . . .
>
> . . . When the coup had been related, the stick which had been passed for it was returned to the umpire, who thrust it in the ground with his right or left hand, according as the winning was by the party to his right or left. . . . Whichever side had the most sticks received a feast the next day from the losing side.[9]

The old Comanches, too, held meetings to decide supremacy among them. A handful of straws served for tally. Straw by straw, the old stags put in the evening asking each other questions of dishonorable or evil-scented nature. "How many times have you been divorced?" "How many times did you turn back from the war path without meeting the enemy?" was another favorite. Or, "How many times did you take a woman on a war party?" And so on into the night. This interesting game is unquestionably a travesty on coup-counting bouts of the Plains Warrior Societies. The

[9] Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, vol. 1, pp. 78–79.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

575 887 ●521 travesty is a burlesque of the values which were held dear by the younger men who were still actively engaged in war and the ego-maintenance competition. As sorcery may be looked upon as one weapon of revenge used by the old men,[10] so the burlesqued coup counting may be interpreted as an equivalent compensatory mechanism.

Comanches of warrior age did not engage in coup-counting bouts in the manner described for the Cheyenne by Grinnell.

575 887 626 In a more serious way, the Smoke Lodge functioned as a trading post for gossip and ideas among the old men, much as did the general store in old New England and rural America.

Concerning matters of general tribal moment, the old men expressed their thoughts and apparently made them known to the public by letting the peace chief know their concensus. Their influence was advisory; it was designed to sway public opinion, but without direct power to mould public policy. Post Oak Jim properly tagged the old men in the Smoke Lodge by explaining, "they were just like a Chamber of Commerce." They could make talk and mayhap make opinion, but they could make no law. In some bands, however, they could definitely help the peace chief determine the time of camp moving.

That the old men in general, as did the peace chiefs in particular, acted as soothers of ruffled tempers, pacifiers of internal dissension, is well attested. It was an important factor in the totality of social regulation. And let it not be forgotten that in this role they were just as important in keeping disputes from reaching the breaking point as is the authorized guardian of the law in more complex societies. The chances are that they were more so.

575 887 In later days, the Smoke Lodge in the Antelope band became the butt of a pair of mischievous pranksters. Originally there was no foolishness, and the old men were respected. But two boys, Leader, and his pal, Through, were without respect or restraint. How the old men responded to their indignities is revealing.

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[754] [10] The role of sorcery in this respect has been nicely phrased by Professor Ralph Linton. "There is abundant evidence that among the Comanche the transition was often a difficult one for the individual. Warriors did not prepare for old age, thinking it a better fate to be killed in action. When waning physical powers forced them to assume the new role, many of them did so grudgingly, and those who had strong magic would go on trying to enforce the rights which belonged to the younger status. Such bad old men were a peril to young ones beginning their careers, for they were jealous of them simply because they were young and strong and admired by the women. The medicine power of the young men was still weak, and the old men could and did kill them by malevolent magic. It is significant that although benevolent medicine men might be of any age in Comanche folklore, malevolent ones were always old." Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York, 1936), p. 121.

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

595 462 went about her tasks cheerfully and willingly. Whichever one of the women divided the labor reserved enough for herself so that she was just as busy as the other women.

857 462 The little girls of the family stayed close to the women the day through, and performed tasks suitable for their ages. But the little boys roamed far and wide, never seeming to have any duties except when they were helping their father with the horses.

521 522 462 [296] [124] During group tasks there was always quite a bit of conversation and considerable laughing. In warm weather the women would go to the creek together, select a place in the shade where the water was about six or eight inches deep, and sit in the water on the sandy bottom to do the family wash. I never learned what the talk and laughter were about, as I was never able to accumulate a squaw vocabulary. 521 562 609 124 [198] (Comanche women held only the most necessary conversation with any man, Indian or white, other than their own menfolks. And while I was generally able to figure out the subject of the men's conversation and follow its progress, I seldom recognized a word used by the women when they conversed among themselves. At times I was inclined to think they even had a different language.)

595 The same air of camaraderie seemed to prevail whenever the wives were together in a group. I noticed it in the store whenever there was only one family present. Their trading done, the wives would draw 516 [352] their chairs into a group and converse. They never had chairs in their camps, but the women never passed up the several chairs we had in the store—although once in a while some quite old squaw would insist on sitting on the floor. If the chairs were all occupied, the women never hesitated to sit on the floor, and the people trading would walk around them.

595 Wherever you saw a man's wives—in town, on the reservation, or at a celebration—they always formed a group. You would not find one wife in a store and another out on the street. Two or more groups of wives would often chat together in the store or sit together in the shade on the reservation or at a powwow.

595 422 294 One custom which seemed odd to me was that of each wife's having her own sewing machine. The sewing done by the average family was not so extensive that one machine would not easily have sufficed. Yet each wife would have her own—something I had been alerted to look for by an article that had appeared in the *Star* commenting that each of Quanah Parker's wives had her individual sewing machine.